

# Episode 36 | Interrupting Anxiety and Stress in Vet Med & Life

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Anxiety, stress, and the superpower you probably don't even know you have that can interrupt the cycle, that's what we're talking about in Episode 36.

Welcome to the Joyful DVM podcast. I'm your host, Veterinarian, and Certified Life Coach, Cari Wise. Whether you're dealing with the challenges in Vet Med, struggling with self-confidence, or you're just trying to figure out how to create a life and a career that you actually enjoy, you'll find encouragement, education, and empowering concepts, you can apply right away. Let's get started.

Hey everybody. Welcome to Episode 36. Today, I want to talk about how we can interrupt the cycle of anxiety and stress by using the power of the word AND.

I love the word AND because whenever we are in a situation where we're feeling very stressed or anxious, it's important for us to recognize that it's not what's happening that's creating that for us.

So whenever we're feeling overwhelmed or we're feeling afraid, many times we want to attribute that to what's happening and we want, therefore, things to be happening differently in order to feel better. And that's not how this works at all. So when there are things that are happening around us, and we feel an emotion, in between, there's a bit of space, where all of our thoughts and beliefs about the situation are living. And it's our thoughts and beliefs about the situation that are creating the way that we feel.

Now, one hack is to change the way that you're thinking about it, and yes and no. I mean, I think that is very useful, but a lot of us don't necessarily want to change what we believe about a situation and that's okay. But there is still a way to feel better, even when our opinion of a situation, our beliefs around a situation or a sequence of events has us feeling stressed out or worried or fearful. And that is through the power of the word AND.

Using the word AND brings us back to what is true today. I like to use it as a bit of a hack when I really start to recognize that I'm feeling overwhelmed, I'm feeling stressed out because if I ask myself, "Why am I overwhelmed or stressed out?", I could probably come up with a list of things. A couple of things that would be at the top of my list these days are things like the state of the world with the pandemic and then the state of the United States is that we've got this transition of power and all the events that have occurred in that will be occurring here over the next several weeks. If I spend a lot of time thinking about either of those things, I very easily can find myself feeling anxious or feeling stressed or feeling worried. And I don't necessarily want to change that because I don't necessarily want to change what I believe about either of those things.

However, I do recognize that I am not really excited about the idea of feeling stressed and worried and anxious all the time. It's no way to live as my net emotional state. It's not useful. Here's why:

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whenever I feel anxious and stressed and worried, the actions that I take from there - so the things that I do in my own life; the things that I engage in; my behaviors, don't move me closer to the person that I want to be. They don't move me closer to my goals. When I'm kind of stuck in that anxiety and dread and worry, I don't make much forward motion at all in my own life. And I didn't just start to loop on those same thoughts and worries and beliefs. And then I start to buy into the idea that things outside of my control need to change before I can feel better. That's a normal conclusion that a lot of us draw, but it's actually, we don't even have to have change things to feel better. And the power of the word AND is useful here.

When we're in those situations where we recognize that our focus really is on the things that are outside of us - the things that we can't control - and we recognize that we're feeling stressed and anxious and worried, if we tag on the word AND, it's a bit of an indicator or a trigger to ask ourselves, like, "What else is true?", AND "what else?", AND "what's the alternative?", AND "what other things can I consider?" That's why I love the word AND. This is happening right now, AND "what else?" Bring it back to the "what else" because if you answer the "what else", we can go and find intentionally things that are true that will likely have a bit of a calming effect on us.

So for example, if I'm worried about the state of the pandemic. So I'm worried about how long that's been going on, and I have my own thoughts and beliefs about what everybody should be doing to slow down the progression and all of that because we've all got our own opinions about this for sure. If I only think about what I believe should be different then I'm going to just continue to feel stressed and worried.

But if I tag onto the back of that AND, something that is also true, it will help to just balance that out a little bit. So I like AND I am resilient. I am resilient. I think that's true. I think that's true for me. I actually think it's true for you too.

So if you liked that one, by all means, steal it, use it. Just remind and yourself that you are resilient. How do we know this? We know this because we've been almost a year in now and, and actually a year in now and a lot of things, to a pandemic and you're still here, and you're still moving forward, and you're still figuring it out. You are resilient. So we may think that we don't have the capacity to handle a few more months of this, but we also have evidence that we have the capability of doing it because we've already done it. So, AND I am resilient. I don't want to deal with this pandemic for another year AND I am resilient and capable of doing it. Just one example helps balance out the way that we feel about that.

Same thing about if we're focused on maybe the transition of power; if we're really worried about what's going to happen next AND I am safe right now. So we can bring it back to what's true for us at this moment.

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It's often the thoughts of what we think might happen, the what-if scenarios, the catastrophizing, that has us really feeling a lot of anxiety and stress. The more inputs that we have - so the more voices that we listened to; the more media that we read; the more opinions that we gather, which actually just compounds that uncertainty.

Here's the tricky, interesting thing about uncertainty. It was always uncertain. So uncertainty is just part of our human experience. We never have been able to predict the future ever, but most of the time, we don't spend a lot of mental energy trying to predict the future. A lot of the time, we don't think intentionally about the future, and specifically, we don't think a lot about it negative way in most cases.

Now, what's happened over the last 12 months has totally changed that. We're thinking about the future with more frequency than before, and we're thinking about it through the lens of what terrible things may happen next, both in regard to the pandemic; both in regard to the elections and the transition of power; also in regard to the way that we're practicing medicine and the way that it's been going through the pandemic and how it may go in the future.

So we're looking at the lens of the future through a bit of a darker lens than usual, kind of trying to predict what's going to happen, worrying about what might happen, and it's simply the focus on that, that's increasing the anxiety and frustration that we feel and the stress. What's true is that we never knew what was going to happen next. We never do know that. We haven't historically spend a lot of time thinking about it. so we haven't been concerned about it. We haven't felt stressed out about it.

These days, we're thinking about the future a lot. And we're thinking about the future a lot through the lens of uncertainty; through the lens of recognition, that there's just very little that we control. That creates a lot of fear. That creates a lot of stress. And so that's why it's so important to use the word AND to bring you back around to what is true today.

AND I am resilient.

AND I am capable of handling what comes next.

AND I am safe right now.

AND I am able to heal myself.

Those kinds of statements are very helpful to help balance out that shift in thoughts that has gone a lot to trying to predict the future and looking at the future through the lens of fear and uncertainty, because like I said, what's always true is we've never been able to predict the future. The reason that we feel so uncomfortable about that reality today is simply because we're thinking about the future in a different way. And we're looking at it through the lens of these things that have happened in our most recent past that have been very blatantly out of our control. What's also true is that we never could control those things.

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We couldn't control any of the things and we can only always control ourselves. So that's another thing that I like to bring myself back to with an AND statement is AND I always get to decide for me because what's always true is that I always get to make my own decisions in any given moment. I get to decide what I believe. I get to decide what I focus on. I get to determine what I want to do, what actions I personally want to take. I am the one who controls me always. And I think that is so empowering to remember, because if we forget that part, if we forget that we do always get to make our own choices, even the choice of what we focus our attention on, then we really do start to believe that our lives are at the effect of the world. And when the world becomes uncertain and the world becomes scary, then our lives become scary. And our daily experiences become uncomfortable and stressed and fearful. And that's not a way that we want to move forward.

So equal airtime, use that word AND. I'm not saying change your opinions. I'm not saying change your perspective. What I am saying is give yourself the opportunity to still see both sides.

Right now, we're very tilted because what's mostly in our awareness and our focus is all of this stuff that's outside of our control - all of the things that are happening around us and all of the predictions that we're making about how that's going to impact us moving forward. We don't have proof of any of it yet, and we need to give ourselves equal air time to consider both alternatives, both perspectives. There's always something else, and just to come back and intentionally anchor yourself in what is true.

You are resilient.

You are qualified to do your job.

You are capable of handling any way that you feel emotionally.

You have a purpose.

You're here for a reason.

These are the things that are very helpful to me and I hope that they're very helpful for you, because what is true is that you have made it through months of a pandemic. You have made it through months of political uncertainty and you are still here. You still have the ability to make choices for yourself, and one of those choices, my best recommendation, one of those choices would be to just make sure that you give yourself the gift of an alternative perspective.

Use the word AND to remind you of what is still true, despite all the crazy, despite all the fearful things that are coming up, what is still true for you right now? If you can balance it out with that, the entire experience is going to be so much easier.

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Alright, my friends, that's going to wrap it up for this week. I'll see you next time.

Thank you for listening to the Joyful DVM Podcast. If you'd like to learn more about the concepts and ideas discussed here, and how to apply them to your own life to create confidence and empowerment for yourself, you'll love Vet Life Academy. To check it out and learn more, visit [joyfuldvm.com/vetlifeacademy](https://joyfuldvm.com/vetlifeacademy). And if you're loving this podcast, I'd appreciate it if you'd share it with your friends and leave us a review on iTunes.

We can change what's possible in Vet Med together.